

**My name is Kerry Ullman and I live in Fairfield, CT. I am a sophomore at Academy of Our Lady of Mercy- Loralton Hall in Milford, CT. I am in support of Senate Bill 1054, An Act Concerning Students with Dyslexia, however additional language needs to be added to address screening and evidence-based taught by a specialist in reading.**

**I first learned I had dyslexia the summer after my first grade in school. My older brother is dyslexic and my parents realized that I was having the same challenges learning to read that he did. They knew that learning to read for a child of even average intelligence should be a fairly easy thing to do. When a child who is very bright struggles to read they most likely will need to have an early intervention consisting of a program that includes explicit, intense, systematic instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics as quickly as possible. Early intervention is critical for so many reasons. By the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade learning to read is over and teachers turn their focus on reading to learn. Without proper intervention before this time - dyslexics are literally left behind in the classroom, feeling unintelligent, anxious and scared of being found out or asked to read out loud. School becomes unbearable and many students give up. This doesn't have to be.**

**My kindergarten and first grade teachers never even suggested or guessed that I had dyslexia. It was only because my parents saw my struggles and suggested to them that I be tested. I was tested in school as well as privately outside in order to get an unbiased analysis. Once my dyslexia was confirmed the public school system was not willing to provide the intensive programming that would be critical to have in order to remediate successfully. Studies have proven that I needed a specifically trained reading specialist to work on phonics with me intensely every day. My parents immediately enrolled me in an outside private program called Lindamood Bell which is an 8-week/4 hour a day intensive phonics program. Completing this program before 2<sup>nd</sup> grade gave me a solid phonemic base so that I was able to keep up with the other students in school. In 2<sup>nd</sup> and third grade I was also tutored outside of school in the Wilson Reading Program as well as doing in school Fluency Training until the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. I was very lucky my parents had the resources to pay for this professional intervention.**

**I am a hard worker – I put a lot of time into my schoolwork. I still read very very slowly especially in subjects like history and science that tend to have a lot multisyllable words in their texts. I use books on tape that help me but it is not easy. But I know I am smart and I know a lot about dyslexia – I am also very open about it. I know it just means that I use a different part of my brain to read. It doesn't and won't stop me from getting a college degree and doing whatever I want with my life.**

**At the beginning of each and every school year I have a meeting with my teachers and I explain to them about dyslexia – most of them are not aware of what it even is. How could they not be aware of something that at least 10-15% of their students probably have in varying degrees? I often think about all the other children that**

don't have parents that know what it is, or teachers trained to look out for it or properly trained reading specialists that can administer a program that will give them a solid foundation. Their school years become a nightmare.

I am testifying today because I think it is so important for all teachers to be knowledgeable of what dyslexia is and what to look for. Trained reading specialists are critical to ensure that all dyslexics get that important base. **ALL STUDENTS** (even non-dyslexics) would benefit from an intense phonological program in the first and second grade. Students should not have to experience the awful feeling of not knowing why they are struggling and that it has nothing to do with their intelligence. Each year (each school day) that it goes unchecked is a terrible tragedy for each and every dyslexic. Identification, understanding, correct intervention and support is all it takes for lifetime of school success. **EVERY CHILD WANTS TO SUCCEED.** The earlier the intervention the more successful they will be.

Thank you for listening to my story and know that these changes in the law will absolutely help students get the help they need and change their lives.